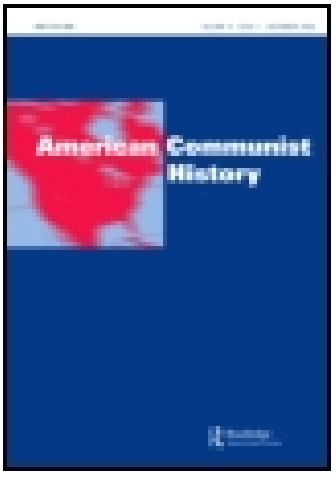
This article was downloaded by: [Eindhoven Technical University]
On: 26 June 2014, At: 18:10
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



American Communist History
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rach20

Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged: A Philosophic and Literary Companion

Eric Daniels [a]

[a] Research Assistant Professor, Clemson Institute for the Study of Capitalism, Clemson University

Published online: 03 Jun 2010.

To cite this article: Eric Daniels (2010) Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged: A Philosophic and Literary Companion, American Communist History, 9:1, 104-106, DOI: 10.1080/14743891003665143

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14743891003665143

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged: A Philosophic and Literary Companion
EDWARD W. YOUNKINS, 2007
Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited
xviii + 414 pp. Notes on contributors, figures, notes, and index. $24.95.

Ayn Rand emigrated to the United States from the Soviet Union in 1926, bringing her unique perspective on communism to the American intellectual scene. Born Alisa Rosenbaum in St. Petersburg in czarist Russia, the young Rand witnessed the Bolshevik Revolution from Petrograd and fled with her family to the Crimea during the Russian Civil War. Even before Lenin's ultimate victory, Rand had expressed open hostility to communist rule and admiration for American ideals. After taking a degree in history at the University of Petrograd, Rand and her family arranged for a visa to visit relatives in Chicago, knowing that she would never return.

After a brief stint in Hollywood as a screenwriter, Rand turned her attention to fiction and philosophy. Her first semi-autobiographical novel, *We The Living* (1936), was set in Soviet Russia and offered a searing indictment of collectivism and communism. Her first-hand experience of communism brought her notice on the American right, and after her successful publication of *The Fountainhead* (1943), she became a noted public figure. Called to testify as a friendly witness before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1947, Rand offered her views of how the 1944 film *Song of Russia* misrepresented life in the Soviet Union. Rand later expressed doubts about HUAC's efficacy and the propriety of some of its tactics, but never wavered in her view that communists had infiltrated Hollywood and exerted a malign role.

Rand's magnum opus, *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), stands not only as her most developed work of fiction but also as the fullest fictional expression of her individualist, pro-capitalist philosophy that she ultimately called objectivism. The essays in *Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged*, edited by Edward Younkins, explore the multiple layers of Rand's work and its contemporary significance. Published in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the novel, the revival of interest in *Atlas Shrugged* in the last year and its surge in sales during the recent economic crisis make this explication of Rand's ideas relevant to the on-going debates about Rand's role in the anti-communist movement in America. Readers of this journal hoping to gain a new understanding of Ayn Rand, one of America's most influential anti-communist writers, would do well to reconsider the role of *Atlas Shrugged* in American culture.

Younkins's collection includes thirty-six essays covering everything from literary analysis, including ten chapters on the novel's characterization and depiction of human relationships, to the philosophic and economic arguments Rand makes. The collection provides a useful introductory section of essays that introduce the unfamiliar reader to the novel and Ayn Rand's ideas, though most of the essays assume that readers of the companion have already read the work in question.

Downloaded by [Eindhoven Technical University] at 18:10 26 June 2014

The most interesting essays for readers of this journal will likely be the ones that focus on her philosophic defence of capitalism and individualism contra communism or those that touch directly on her criticism of Marxist ideas in the novel. Rand's most direct depiction of communist/Marxist ideals comes in her story of the fictional Twentieth Century Motor Company, which adopts ''from each according to his ability, to each according to his need'' as its corporate modus operandi. Here, the essays by economists Peter Boetkke, Bryan Caplan and Steven Horwitz are most relevant. They explore, respectively, the literary elements that illustrate pro-capitalist economic principles, the connection between Rand and the Public Choice school of economics, and the parallels between the ideas about money held by Rand and Jean-Baptiste Say.

As contributor Boetkke points out, the fictional story of the Twentieth Century Motor Company and its demise after adopting the Marxian slogan as its guiding principle is ''the best discussion of economics in the novel'' (p. 186, n. 8). Rand explores not only the practical objections to state planning, as was common for mid-century anti-communists, but also the moral objections raised by her individualist philosophy. The whole of the novel stands as a deep rejection of the moral underpinnings of communism and collectivism and a celebration of egoism, which sets Rand apart from other anti-communist writers, who variously adopted utilitarian or Christian arguments in service of their anti-communism.

The main shortcomings of this collection of essays about *Atlas Shrugged* are its over-reaching and its lack of coherence. As with any edited collection, reviewers and readers will find unevenness in the quality and integration of the essays. This typical criticism is amplified by the inclusion of thirty-six essays, which at times gives the collection a sprawling feel that lacks cohesion. Though *Atlas Shrugged* is certainly a big novel with big ideas, which might merit a large variety of essays in a collection of this type, more than a few of the contributions bear only the most tenuous connection to the novel, leaving the reader more confused than illuminated. Still others engage more in internecine disputes about Rand's ideas by those who have been influenced by them than in explication and will be of little use to those attempting to understand Rand on her own terms.

In the end, Ayn Rand remains an important but as yet underappreciated figure in the anti-communist movement in America. She arrived in America with unquestionable credentials for speaking about what the Soviet communist experiment meant in practice. Through her fictional work, as well as her testimony at HUAC and her prominence as a public intellectual in the 1960s and 1970s, Rand etched out a place as one of America's foremost critics of communism and its ideals. Yet, because she opposed conservatism as deeply as she did liberalism, Rand's anti-communism has often been misunderstood. With the publication of Younkins's collection and other new scholarly work on Ayn Rand that misunderstanding can be corrected.

Downloaded by [Eindhoven Technical University] at 18:10 26 June 2014

ERIC DANIELS, *Research Assistant Professor, Clemson Institute for the Study of Capitalism, Clemson University*
© 2010, Eric Daniels

Resisting McCarthyism: To Sign or Not to Sign California's Loyalty Oath

BOB BLAUNER, 2009
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press
xx + 307 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. $34.95.

Downloaded by [Eindhoven Technical University] at 18:10 26 June 2014

In the spirit of full disclosure, I mention here that I am the Deputy Director of The Bancroft Library, at the University of California, Berkeley. Bancroft holds the University of California Archives (Systemwide and Berkeley campus administrations). In addition, it holds the personal papers, oral histories and related documents of many of the major figures involved in the California Loyalty Oath crisis, 1949–1952.

In *Resisting McCarthyism*, Bob Blauner, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, has created a compelling history of one of the thorniest challenges ever to confront the University of California. His book is neither dry, nor is it parochial, for it builds from a strong account of national as well as regional attitudes and fears of the era, while conveying much of the drama, urgency and distress that afflicted the University participants.

Blauner analyzes the values, motivations, and perspectives of those caught up in the skirmishes. His approach is well complemented by the format and structure of his book. The placement of photographs of the major figures of the controversy in the opening pages helps to establish Blauner's focus on those individuals. Although the volume is arranged essentially chronologically, his division of the history into three broad parts helps organize the themes and events into helpful clusters.

Blauner confirms the national significance of the crisis with opening quotations from civil libertarian Alexander Meiklejohn, ''the most important issue ever faced by an American university,'' and from Clark Kerr, the first chancellor of the Berkeley campus and later president of the University, ''the greatest single controversy between a university faculty and its board of trustees in American history.'' (Both quotations from Blauner, page xiii.) That nationwide thirty-one of the sixty-nine professors fired for political reasons in the McCarthy era were dismissed by the University of California reveals the gravity of the controversy.

Through his close reading of the rich variety of sources (official reports, confidential memoranda, personal correspondence, reminiscences, court briefs and the like) Bob Blauner has distilled the motivations, prejudices and even personal grievances among the players that make human and understandable some of the most challenging aspects of the battles that ensued.